

Senate Bill 343  
March 31, 2009  
Presented by Chris Hunter  
House Agriculture Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record I am Chris Hunter, Fisheries Division Administrator of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP).

FWP has legal responsibility for the regulation of importation, transplantation and introduction of wildlife into the state. Wildlife is broadly defined to include any wild mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian, fish, mollusk, crustacean, or other wild animal or the egg, sperm, embryo, or offspring of the wild animal. An Aquatic Nuisance Species Plan was written by the Montana Aquatic Nuisance Species Technical Committee and approved by the Governor in 2002. We have been implementing that plan with a small program, consisting of one biologist and a technician, for the past five years. The emphasis of the program has been to build public awareness of aquatic invasive species such as zebra and quagga mussels and Eurasian water milfoil, to prevent the introduction of aquatic invasive species and to monitor the waters of the state for new aquatic invasive species. The plan would benefit from an update as contemplated in this legislation.

There is one aspect of SB 343 in particular that would be a very helpful addition to our tools to manage aquatic invaders. That is the ability to designate Invasive Species Management Areas. In many respects, the battle against these invaders really begins in earnest when they arrive in the state. If we can contain them rather than have them spread further, that is a victory for the state. The ability to designate Invasive Species Management Areas would be a good tool to help us contain these species when they arrive in the state. Although the chances of eradicating an invasive species once it is established are not good, they are greatly improved if the species is limited to a small area rather than widely dispersed.

FWP supports this legislation because it is critical to help in our fight against aquatic invasive species.